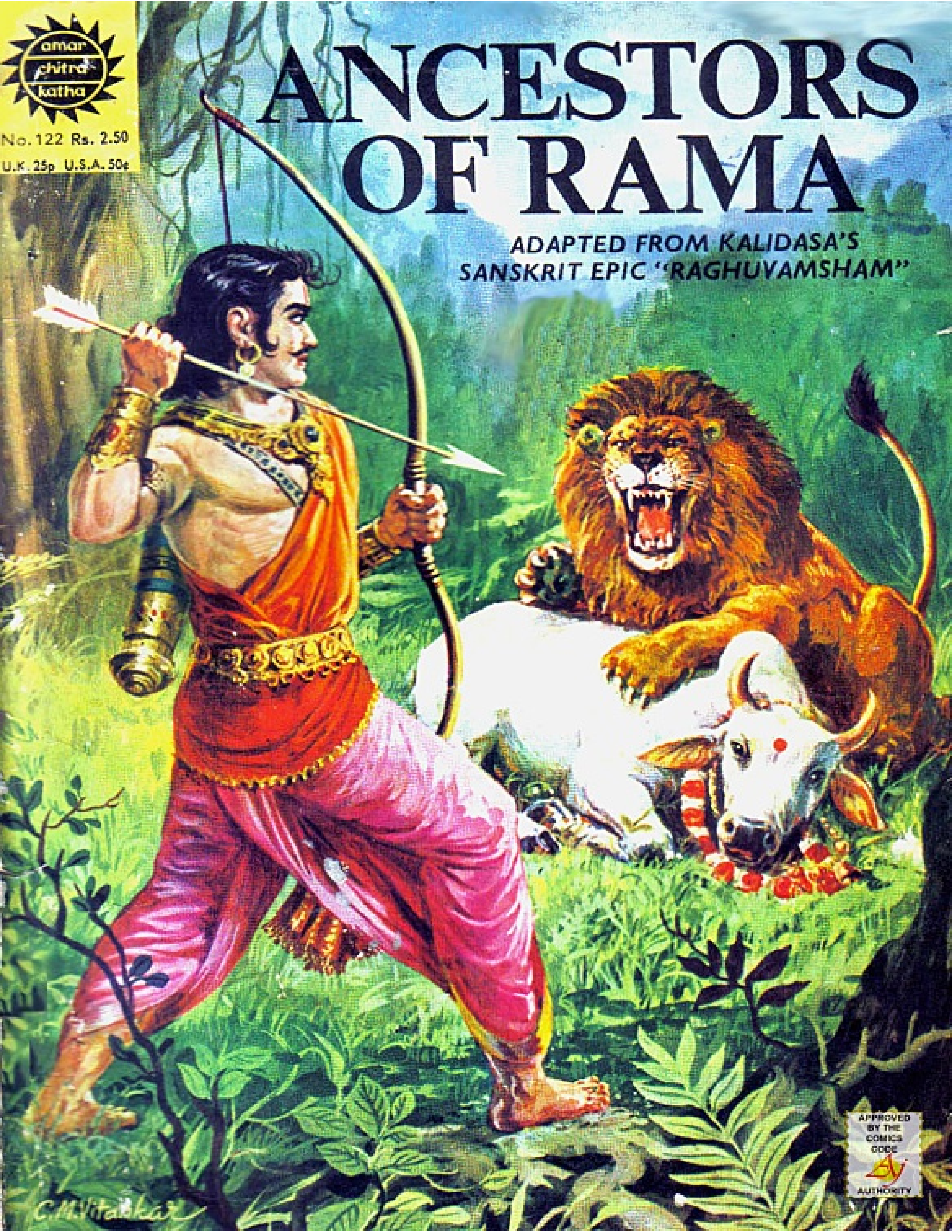

amar chitra katha
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ANCESTORS OF RAMA
ADAPTED FROM KALIDASA'S SANSKRIT EPIC "RAGHUVAMSHAM"
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

Tradition has it that Rama was the ideal king. Gandhiji was only reinforcing it when he named his ideal state 'Rama-Rajya'. Yet the predecessors of Rama, in his dynasty of the Ikshwakus, were as valiant and as benign as Rama himself. This story tells of their deeds.

The heroes of epics have their tragic flaws because epics always tell the whole truth. Like Rama, his ancestors also had flawed characters despite the glory of their personalities.

Inspired by the epic of Valmiki, Kalidasa wrote his classic poem 'Raghuvamsha'. While chronicling the lives of the ancestors of Rama, it noted the decline of the ruling house also.

It is interesting to note that the Puranas trace the genealogy of Rama to the Sun. Some of the illustrious ancestors listed in the genealogy are Manu, Ikshwaku, Harischandra, Rohita, Sagara, Bhagiratha, Ambarisha and Rituparna. Brihadbala, who fought in the Mahabharata war is said to be a descendant of Rama.

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ANCESTORS OF RAMA



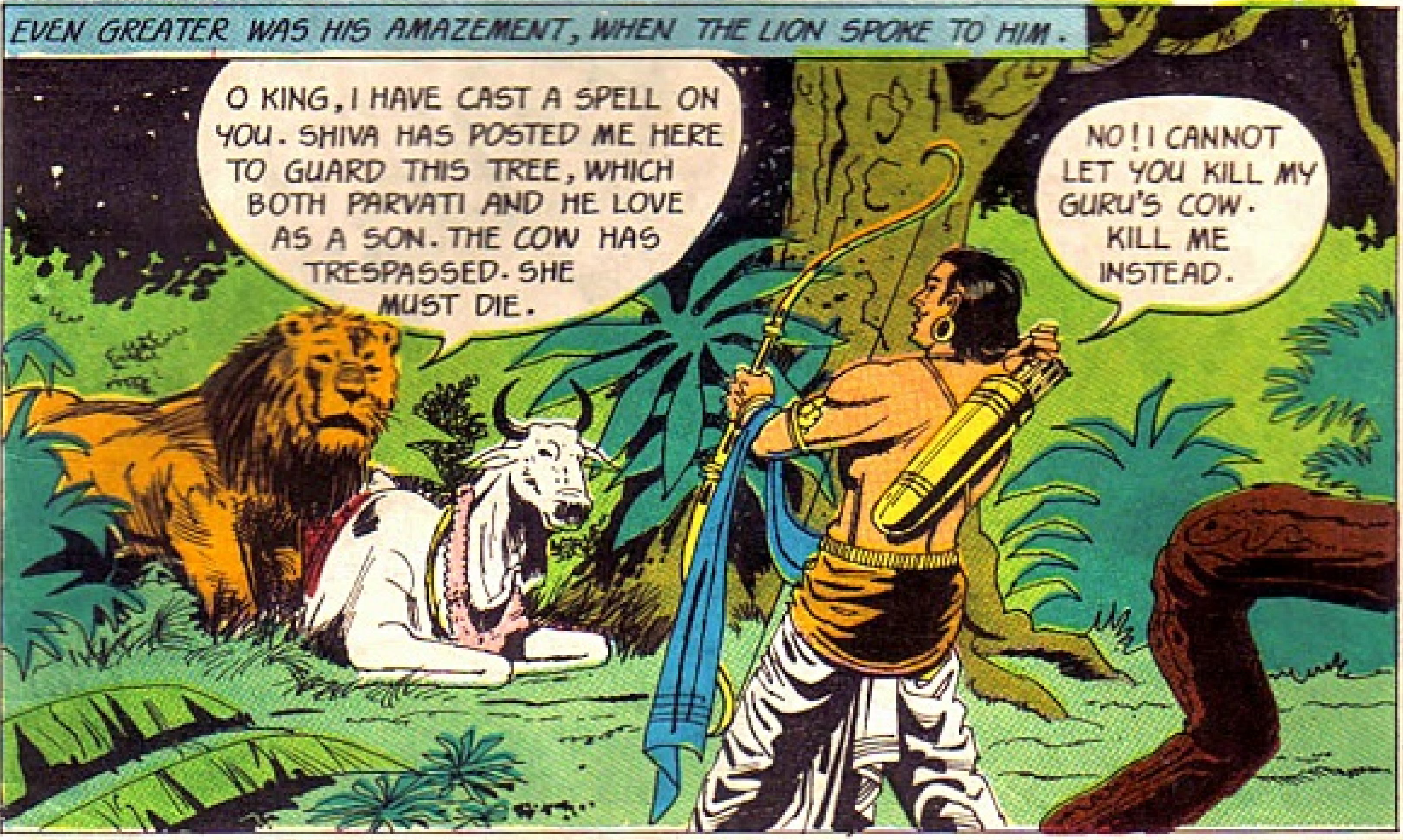

AT THE HERMITAGE OF THE SAGE —
I TRUST ALL IS WELL WITH YOU AND YOUR KINGDOM ?
BY YOUR GRACE, MY KINGDOM COULD NOT BE MORE PROSPEROUS OR MY SUBJECTS HAPPIER. YET ...
... MY QUEEN AND I ARE VERY UNHAPPY. WE YEARN FOR A SON. WHY ARE WE DEPRIVED THUS ?
VASISHTHA CLOSED HIS EYES FOR A MOMENT. THEN —
LONG, LONG AGO, WHEN GANGA FLOWED IN HEAVEN, AND YOU WERE A YOUNG PRINCE, YOU HAD GONE TO VISIT INDRA WITH SUDAKSHINA, YOUR CHERISHED BRIDE.
"WHILE RETURNING HOME YOU PASSED BY SURABHI, THE DIVINE COW."
AH! HERE COMES THE CROWN-PRINCE OF AYODHYA WITH HIS BRIDE TO PAY ME HOMAGE. I SHALL BLESS THEM WITH MANY VALIANT SONS.

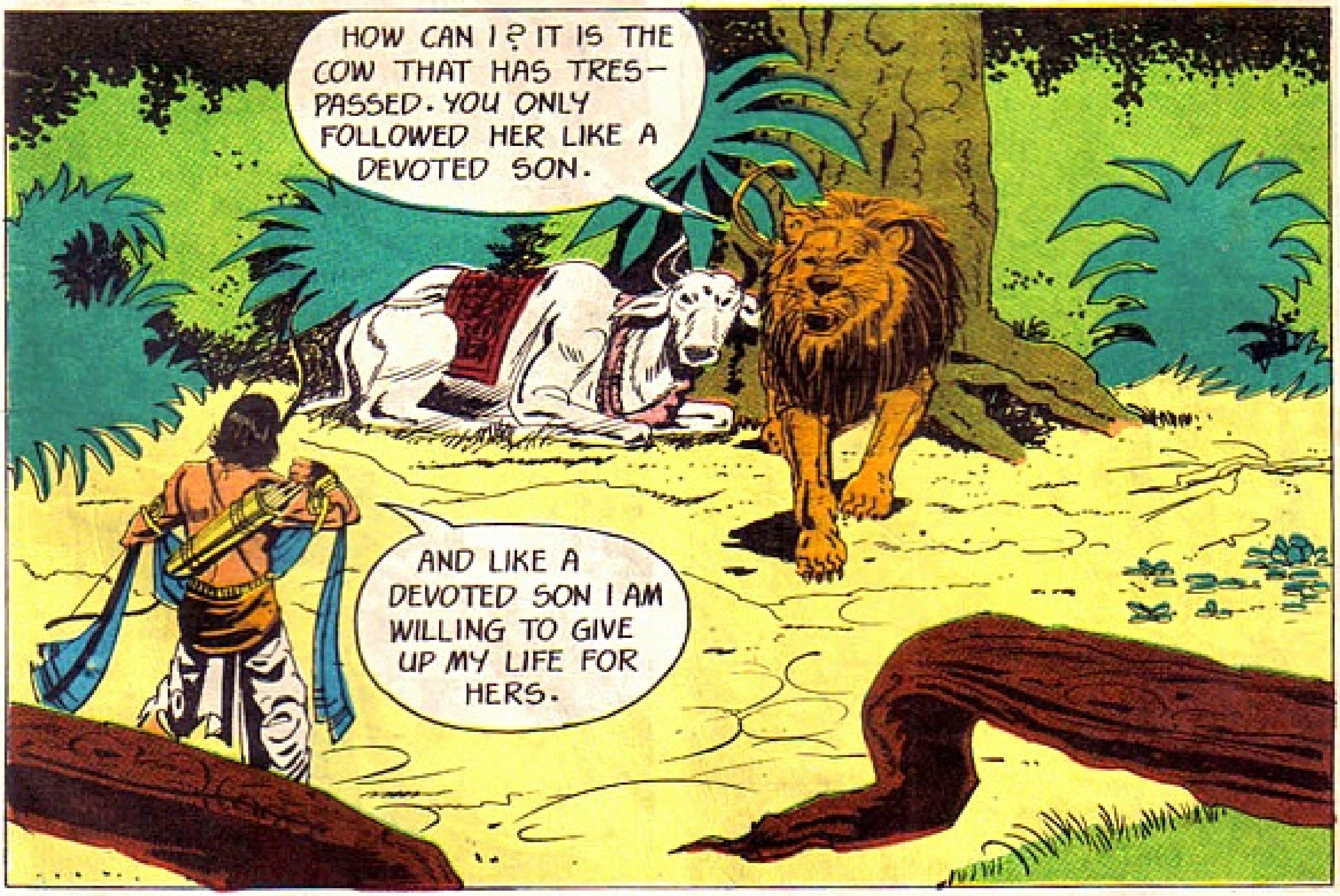

"YOU WERE SO ENGROSSED IN YOUR YOUNG BRIDE, HOWEVER, THAT YOU HARDLY NOTICED SURABHI. SHE FELT SLIGHTED AND HER INTENDED BLESSING CAME FORTH AS A CURSE."
VAIN PRINCE, MAY YOU AND YOUR BRIDE NEVER HAVE ANY CHILDREN TILL YOU ATONE FOR NEGLECTING ME BY SERVING MY OFFSPRING.
"BUT THE DIN OF GANGA WAS SO LOUD THAT YOU DID NOT HEAR THE CURSE, AND DROVE ON."
AS THE WISE WILL TELL YOU, THOSE WHO SLIGHT THE WORTHY, ARE THEMSELVES THE LOSERS.
O VENERABLE ONE, IT WAS AN UNINTENDED SLIGHT. HOW CAN I ATONE FOR IT?
LISTEN. ALONG WITH YOUR WIFE, WAIT ON SURABHI'S DAUGHTER, NANDINI, WITH LOVE AND DEVOTION. PLEASED, NANDINI WILL BESTOW ON YOU THE PRICELESS BOON YOU SEEK.


AT THAT MOMENT, NANDINI CAME BY AND STOOD NEAR THE SAGE.
AT DAWN, SUDAKSHINA MUST ESCORT HER TO THE FOREST AND, IN THE EVENING, WAIT TO WELCOME HER. YOU MUST ATTEND UPON HER DURING THE DAY.
THUS MAY YOU WIN NANDINI'S GRACE AND BECOME THE PROUD FATHER OF MIGHTY SONS.
BEFORE DAWN EACH DAY, SUDAKSHINA WORSHIPPED NANDINI ...
...AND LED HER TOWARDS THE EDGE OF THE FOREST.


I SHALL WAIT HERE TO WELCOME HER IN THE EVENING.
FROM DAWN TO DUSK, DILIPA WAITED UPON NANDINI. AS SHE WALKED HE FOLLOWED HER.
WHEN SHE STOPPED, HE STOPPED.
WHILE SHE RESTED, HE TOO RELAXED.
AT DUSK EACH DAY —
AH! MY BELOVED QUEEN! WAITING PATIENTLY, AS USUAL, TO WELCOME NANDINI AND TAKE HER HOME.
AND SO TWENTY-ONE DAYS ROLLED ON.


ON THE TWENTY-SECOND DAY, NANDINI WANDERED OUT OF THE FOREST.
THE KING IS PATIENT AND ATTEN-TIVE. NOW I MUST TEST HIS VALOUR.
UP THE GREEN SLOPES OF THE HIMALAYAS SHE VENTURED...
...INTO SHIVA'S OWN GROVE.
LET HER WANDER. HER INNATE SANCTITY WILL PROTECT HER FROM HARM.
AND DILIPA TURNED TO GAZE AT THE NATURAL SPLENDOUR OF THE SURROUNDINGS. SUDDENLY —
IT'S MY CHARGE! WHO HAS DARED HARM HER!
UM-AW-AW
HE RAN INTO THE GROVE TO FIND NANDINI AT THE MERCY OF A LION.
I'LL SHOOT THE LION AND FREE YOU IN A MOMENT, GENTLE ONE.
BUT TO HIS AMAZEMENT, DILIPA FOUND HIS ARM PARALYZED.


EVEN GREATER WAS HIS AMAZEMENT, WHEN THE LION SPOKE TO HIM.
O KING, I HAVE CAST A SPELL ON YOU. SHIVA HAS POSTED ME HERE TO GUARD THIS TREE, WHICH BOTH PARVATI AND HE LOVE AS A SON. THE COW HAS TRESPASSED. SHE MUST DIE.
NO! I CANNOT LET YOU KILL MY GURU'S COW. KILL ME INSTEAD.


HOW CAN I? IT IS THE COW THAT HAS TRES-PASSED. YOU ONLY FOLLOWED HER LIKE A DEVOTED SON.
AND LIKE A DEVOTED SON I AM WILLING TO GIVE UP MY LIFE FOR HERS.


BY DYING YOU WOULD BE SAVING ONLY ONE LIFE. BUT BY LIVING YOU COULD PROTECT MILLIONS. BESIDES, YOUR DEPENDANTS WOULD BE LOST WITHOUT YOU. SO PRESERVE YOUR VALUABLE LIFE AND RETURN HOME.
WOULD YOU BE ABLE TO FACE SHIVA IF HIS TREE WERE DESTROYED? HOW THEN CAN I BETRAY THE FAITH OF THE VENERABLE SAGE?
DO NOT FEAR THE SAGE. YOU CAN APPEASE HIM WITH GIFTS.
BUT WHAT ABOUT MY HONOUR? I VALUE MY REPUTATION, WHICH WILL LIVE AFTER ME, FAR ABOVE MERE LIFE WHICH IS FLEETING. SO, PLEASE ACCEPT MY OFFER AND LET MY CHARGE GO UNHARMED.
THEN SO BE IT.

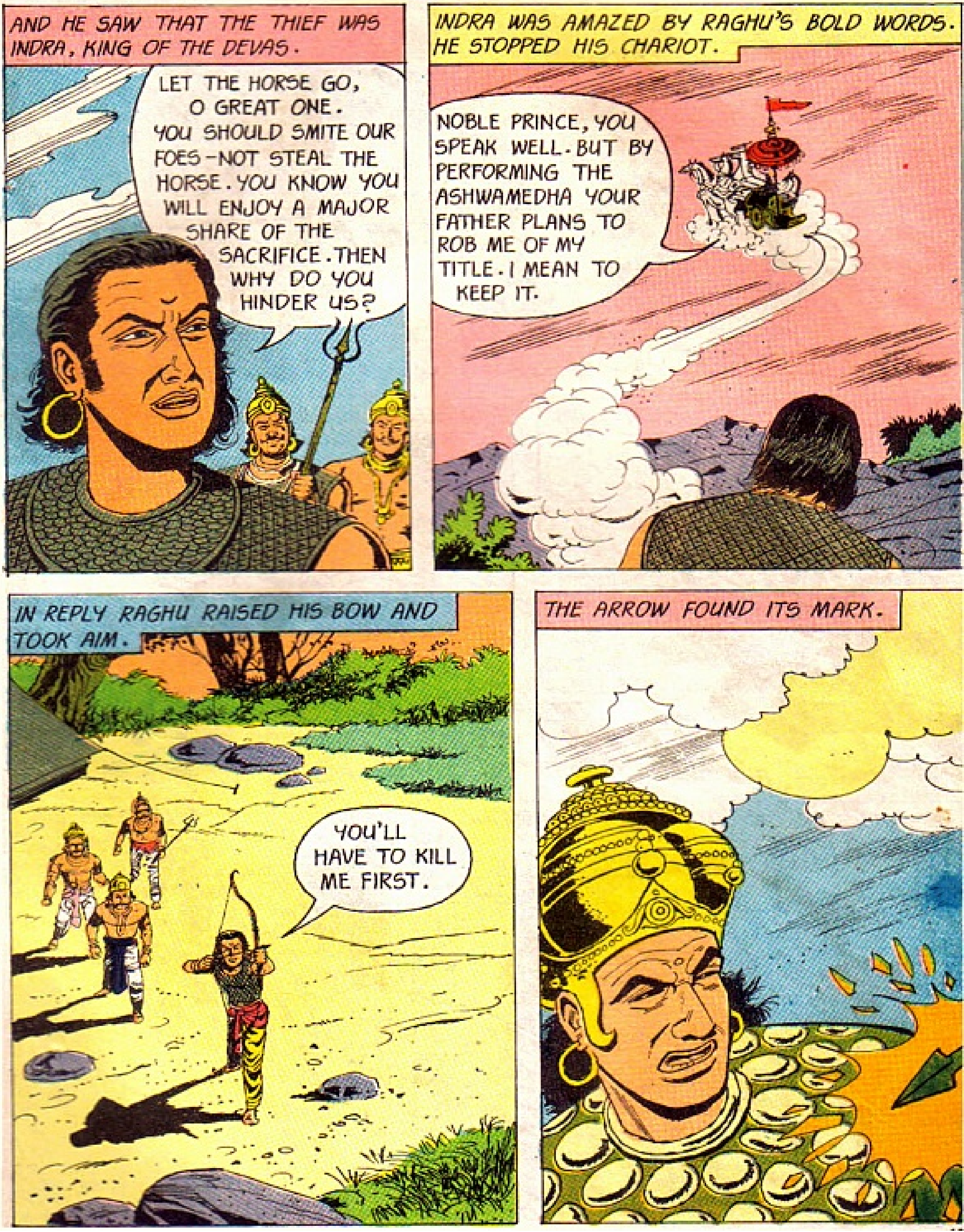


* THE GOD OF DEATH.


YOUR LOYALTY AND DEVOTION HAVE PLEASED ME. YOU DESERVE A BOON.
THEN, GIVE ME A NOBLE SON, O MOTHER.
SO BE IT!
A FEW DAYS LATER, THE ROYAL COUPLE RETURNED TO THEIR PALACE IN A SWIFT CHARIOT.
THEN, IN DUE TIME, SUDAKSHINA BORE DILIPA A SON.
OUR SON SHALL BE AN INDRA ON EARTH. HIS CHARIOT SHALL RANGE OVER HER REMOTEST BOUNDARIES.
THEN LET US NAME HIM RAGHU, THE SWIFT-MOVING ONE.


SOON, RAGHU WAS OLD ENOUGH TO BEGIN HIS EDUCATION.
TO YOU, THE WISEST IN THE LAND, I ENTRUST THE SPIRITUAL TRAINING OF MY SON.
DILIPA HIMSELF INSTRUCTED RAGHU IN THE ART OF WAR.
RAGHU GREW UP TO BECOME A ENEROUS, NOBLE PRINCE.
AH! MY SON, THE HOPE OF THE KINGDOM! I MUST NOW GET YOU MARRIED AND INSTALL YOU AS THE HEIR-APPARENT.
A FEW YEARS AFTER RAGHU WAS INSTALLED—
MY SON, I PLAN TO PERFORM MY HUNDREDTH SACRIFICE, THE ASHWAMEDHA AND EARN THE TITLE—LORD OF A HUNDRED SACRIFICES WHICH INDRA ALONE NOW ENJOYS. YOU SHALL PROTECT THE SACRIFICIAL HORSE AS IT ROAMS THROUGH THE KINGDOMS OF FRIEND AND FOE.


AS RAGHU AND HIS COMRADES FOLLOWED THE HORSE, THEY DEFEATED AND SUBDUED MANY KINGS.
YOU HAVE DEFEATED ME NOW BUT I SHALL HAVE MY REVENGE.
SOME DAY I SHALL MAKE YOU SUFFER THE SAME HUMILIATION.
MEANWHILE, INDRA, KING OF THE DEVAS, WAS PERTURBED.
IF DILIPA PERFORMS THE ASHWAMEDHA, I WILL NO LONGER HAVE SOLE CLAIM OVER THE TITLE—LORD OF A HUNDRED SACRIFICES.
SO, MAKING HIMSELF INVISIBLE, INDRA DROVE OFF THE HORSE.
THE HORSE! IT'S BEING STOLEN.
BUT I DON'T SEE ANY-BODY!
INDRA, HOWEVER, HAD NOT RECKONED WITH NANDINI'S AFFECTION FOR RAGHU. AS THE PRINCE AND HIS FRIENDS STOOD PERPLEXED, SHE BLESSED HIM WITH SUPERNATURAL VISION.
AH! I HAVE RECEIVED THE GRACE TO SEE THINGS NOT VISIBLE TO THE HUMAN EYE.

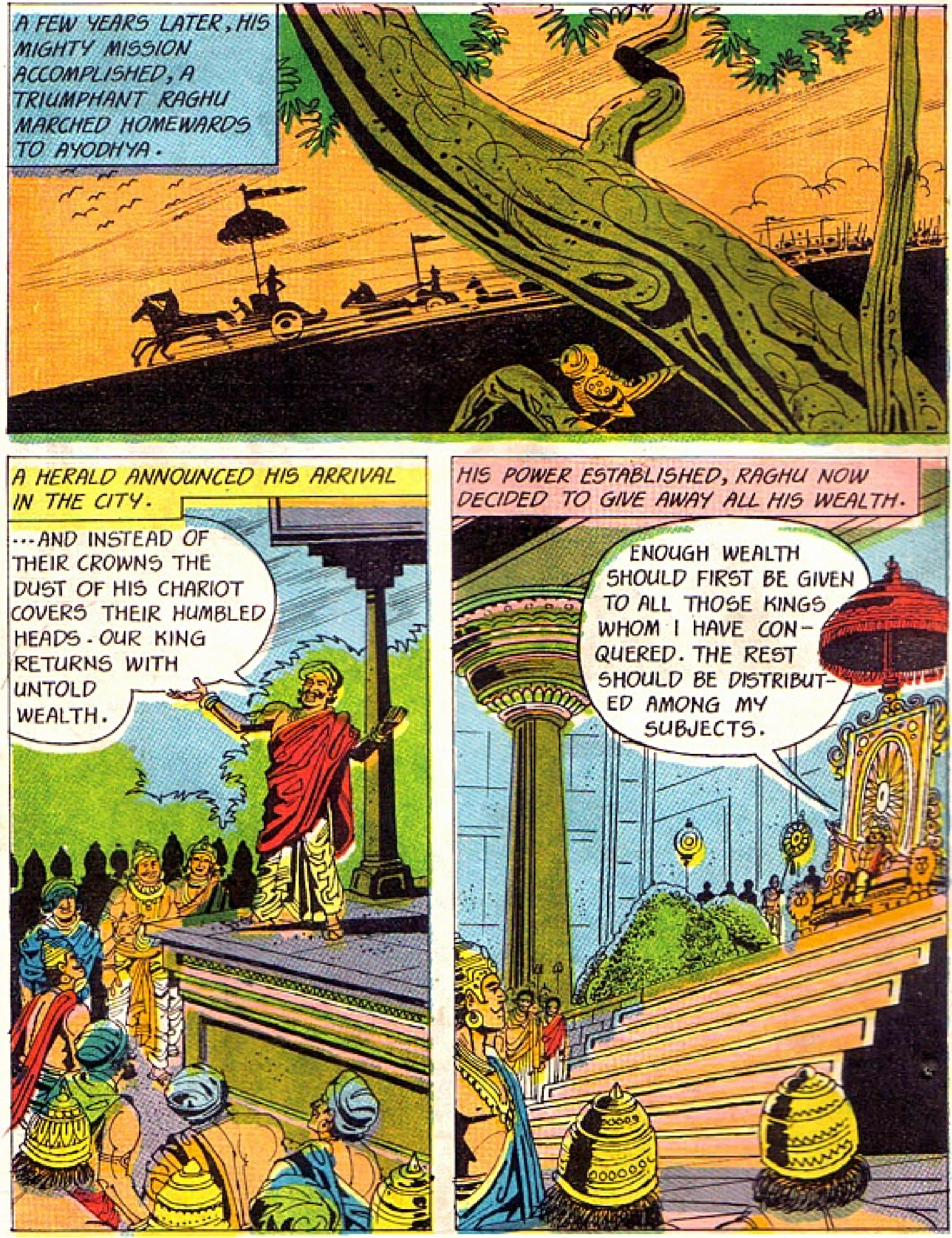

AND HE SAW THAT THE THIEF WAS INDRA, KING OF THE DEVAS.
LET THE HORSE GO, O GREAT ONE. YOU SHOULD SMITE OUR FOES–NOT STEAL THE HORSE. YOU KNOW YOU WILL ENJOY A MAJOR SHARE OF THE SACRIFICE. THEN WHY DO YOU HINDER US?
INDRA WAS AMAZED BY RAGHU'S BOLD WORDS. HE STOPPED HIS CHARIOT.
NOBLE PRINCE, YOU SPEAK WELL. BUT BY PERFORMING THE ASHWAMEDHA YOUR FATHER PLANS TO ROB ME OF MY TITLE. I MEAN TO KEEP IT.
IN REPLY RAGHU RAISED HIS BOW AND TOOK AIM.
YOU'LL HAVE TO KILL ME FIRST.
THE ARROW FOUND ITS MARK.


INDRA WAS FURIOUS.
HE PLACED A DEADLY ARROW ON HIS BOW AND TOOK AIM.
BUT RAGHU WAS TOO QUICK FOR HIM.
AND BEFORE INDRA COULD RECOVER FROM THE SHOCK, RAGHU SHOT DOWN HIS FLAG.
HIS THIRD ARROW CUT INDRA'S BOWSTRING IN TWO.
ENRAGED, INDRA FLUNG HIS BOW AWAY AND...


...SEIZING HIS LETHAL WEAPON, VAJRA...
...HURLED IT AT RAGHU.
ALAS! OUR PRINCE HAS FALLEN!
HOW WILL WE FACE THE KING?
BUT LO! THE NEXT MOMENT RAGHU WAS ON HIS FEET AGAIN. INDRA WAS AMAZED.
YOU HAVE WITHSTOOD MY WEAPON, WHICH EVEN MOUNTAINS CANNOT FACE. I'LL GIVE YOU WHATEVER YOU ASK FOR, EXCEPT THE HORSE.
THEN LET MY FATHER BE GIVEN THE FULL MERITS OF ALL HIS SACRIFICES, EVEN THOUGH HE MAY NOT COMPLETE THE HUNDREDTH. AND...LET MY FATHER KNOW THIS BEFORE I REACH AYODHYA.
SO SHALL IT BE.
AND INDRA'S CHARIOT SOARED HEAVENWARDS.


INDRA KEPT HIS PROMISE. A PROUD DILIPA STOOD WAITING TO WELCOME THE HERO, AS HE ENTERED AYODHYA IN TRIUMPH.
DEAR SON, INDRA'S MESSENGER SPOKE OF YOUR VALOUR TOO BUT YOUR SCARRED HANDS ARE MORE ELOQUENT.
LATER—
I NOW WISH TO ENTRUST THE KINGDOM TO YOU AND LEAD AN ASCETIC LIFE WITH YOUR MOTHER.
SO RAGHU BECAME KING AND DILIPA, WITH SUDAKSHINA, RETIRED TO THE FORESTS.


MEANWHILE, THE VASSAL KINGS, WHOM RAGHU HAD SUBDUED, NOW ROSE IN REVOLT.
IF YOUR KING WANTS HIS TRIBUTE, LET HIM COME AND GET IT.
RAGHU MADE A DECISION.
WE SHALL LEAVE ON A CAMPAIGN OF UNIVERSAL CONQUEST. WE WILL NOT RETURN TILL WE HAVE CONQUERED THE EARTH.
HE SET OUT ON THE CAMPAIGN AT THE HEAD OF A HUGE ARMY.


A FEW YEARS LATER, HIS MIGHTY MISSION ACCOMPLISHED, A TRIUMPHANT RAGHU MARCHED HOMEWARDS TO AYODHYA.
A HERALD ANNOUNCED HIS ARRIVAL IN THE CITY.
...AND INSTEAD OF THEIR CROWNS THE DUST OF HIS CHARIOT COVERS THEIR HUMBLED HEADS. OUR KING RETURNS WITH UNTOLD WEALTH.
HIS POWER ESTABLISHED, RAGHU NOW DECIDED TO GIVE AWAY ALL HIS WEALTH.
ENOUGH WEALTH SHOULD FIRST BE GIVEN TO ALL THOSE KINGS WHOM I HAVE CONQUERED. THE REST SHOULD BE DISTRIBUTED AMONG MY SUBJECTS.



* THE GOD OF WEALTH.



* KUBERA'S CAPITAL.


WHEN RAGHU TOLD THE SAGE ABOUT IT, HE WAS AMAZED.
TO ALL GREAT KINGS EARTH GLADLY YIELDS HER WEALTH. HOW GREAT MUST HE BE WHEN HEAVEN ITSELF SHOWERS HIM WITH WEALTH.
O KING, MAY YOU BE BLESSED WITH A SON AS GREAT AS YOU.
AND SO THE PROMISED SON WAS BORN.
HE SHALL BE CALLED AJA, THE UNBORN ONE — ARISEN FROM THE SUPREME SOUL.
AJA GREW UP TO BE AS VIRTUOUS AND VALIANT A SON AS RAGHU WAS TO HIS PARENTS.


MEANWHILE, AT VIDARBHA, INDUMATI, THE SISTER OF KING BHOJA, HAD COME OF AGE.
INDUMATI MUST SOON BE MARRIED. I SHALL HOLD A SWAYAMVARA FOR HER TO WHICH I SHALL INVITE MANY A NOBLE KING AND CHIEF.
THE INVITATION REACHED THE COURT OF RAGHU. HE SENT FOR AJA.
INDUMATI WOULD MAKE A PEERLESS BRIDE. GO TO VIDARBHA AND WIN HER, MY SON.
SO AJA SET OUT WITH A VAST RETINUE.
TOWARDS THE END OF THEIR JOURNEY, AS THEY SET UP CAMP ON THE BANKS OF THE NARMADA...



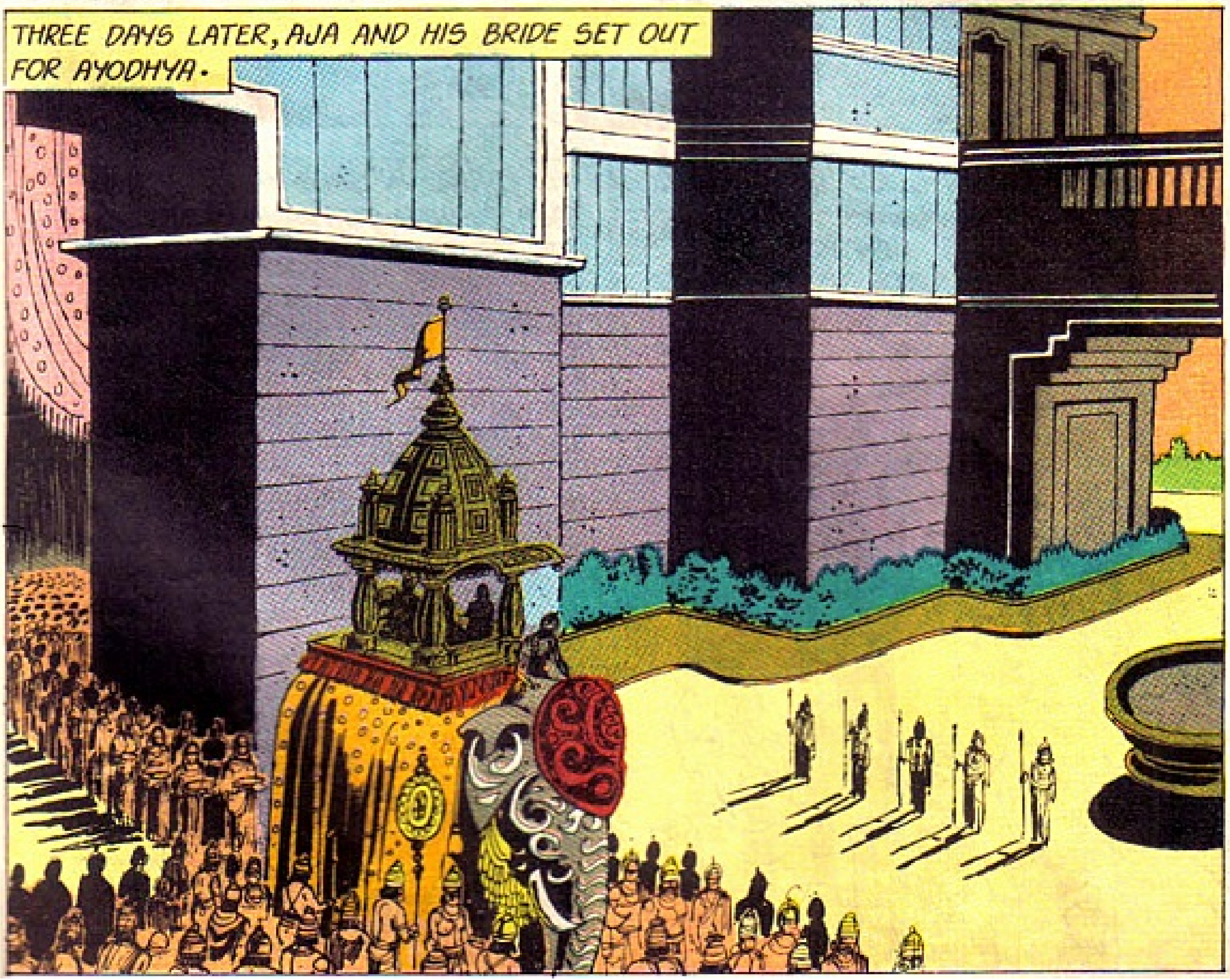
* A CELESTIAL BEING.


THE NEXT MORNING, AJA AND HIS RETINUE RESUMED THEIR JOURNEY.
THE MEETING WITH THE GANDHARVA TELLS ME THAT I HAVE BEEN FAVOURED. PERHAPS I AM FATED TO WIN THE FAIR BRIDE.
AT VIDARBHA, BHOJA HIMSELF CAME OUT TO RECEIVE AJA.
WELCOME, O SON OF RAGHU. YOU MAY REST TONIGHT AT THE SPECIAL PALACE I HAVE BUILT FOR YOU. MY MEN WILL GUIDE YOU TO YOUR THRONE AT THE SWAYAM-VARA HALL TOMORROW.
THE NEXT MORNING, AS AJA ENTERED THE HALL —
THE SON OF RAGHU!
WHAT HOPE DO WE HAVE NOW OF WIN-NING THE FAIR BRIDE?
OH, THAT HE WERE NOT HERE!


THE AIR WAS TENSE AS THE MIGHTY KINGS AWAITED HER ENTRY—EACH WITH THE HOPE THAT HE WOULD BE THE CHOSEN LORD.
SOON, THE PALANQUIN BEARING INDUMATI WAS BROUGHT IN.
ALL EYES TURNED TO GAZE AT HER. SUNANDA, A ROYAL MATRON, LED HER TO THE KINGS.
THE VALIANT AND PIOUS LORD OF MAGADHA.
NOT THIS ONE.


THUS INDUMATI PASSED EACH HOPEFUL KING BY.
THE HANDSOME KING OF ANGA, WORTHY OF ALL LOVE.
NOT MINE.
THE DEVOUT KING OF AVANTI, WHO IN LOOKS AND VALOUR RIVALS THE VERY DEVAS.
NOT IN MY EYES. LET US MOVE ON.
AT LAST, SHE STOOD BEFORE AJA.
AJA, THE CROWN PRINCE OF AYODHYA, MIGHTY RAGHU'S SON.
INDUMATI MADE NO COMMENT BUT ONLY BLUSHED IN CONFUSION.
HE IS THE CHOSEN ONE. I SHALL TEASE HER.
SHALL WE PASS ON, MY PRINCESS?
INDUMATI HARDLY HEARD HER. WITH HER GAZE STILL LOCKED IN HIS, SHE PLACED THE GARLAND AROUND AJA'S NECK. THERE WAS A ROAR OF APPROVAL FROM THE ASSEMBLY.
GANGA HAS BECOME ONE WITH HER FIT MATE, THE OCEAN.


WHILE THE RIVAL SUITORS LOOKED WITH HOSTILITY AT THE PAIR, KING BHOJA LED INDUMATI AND AJA THROUGH THE FESTIVE CITY.
RAGHU ONCE MERCI-LESSLY HUMBLED US AND NOW HIS SON WALKS OFF WITH OUR PRIZE.
WE MUST AVENGE THE INSULT.
LET US WAYLAY THEM AS THEY RETURN TO AYODHYA.

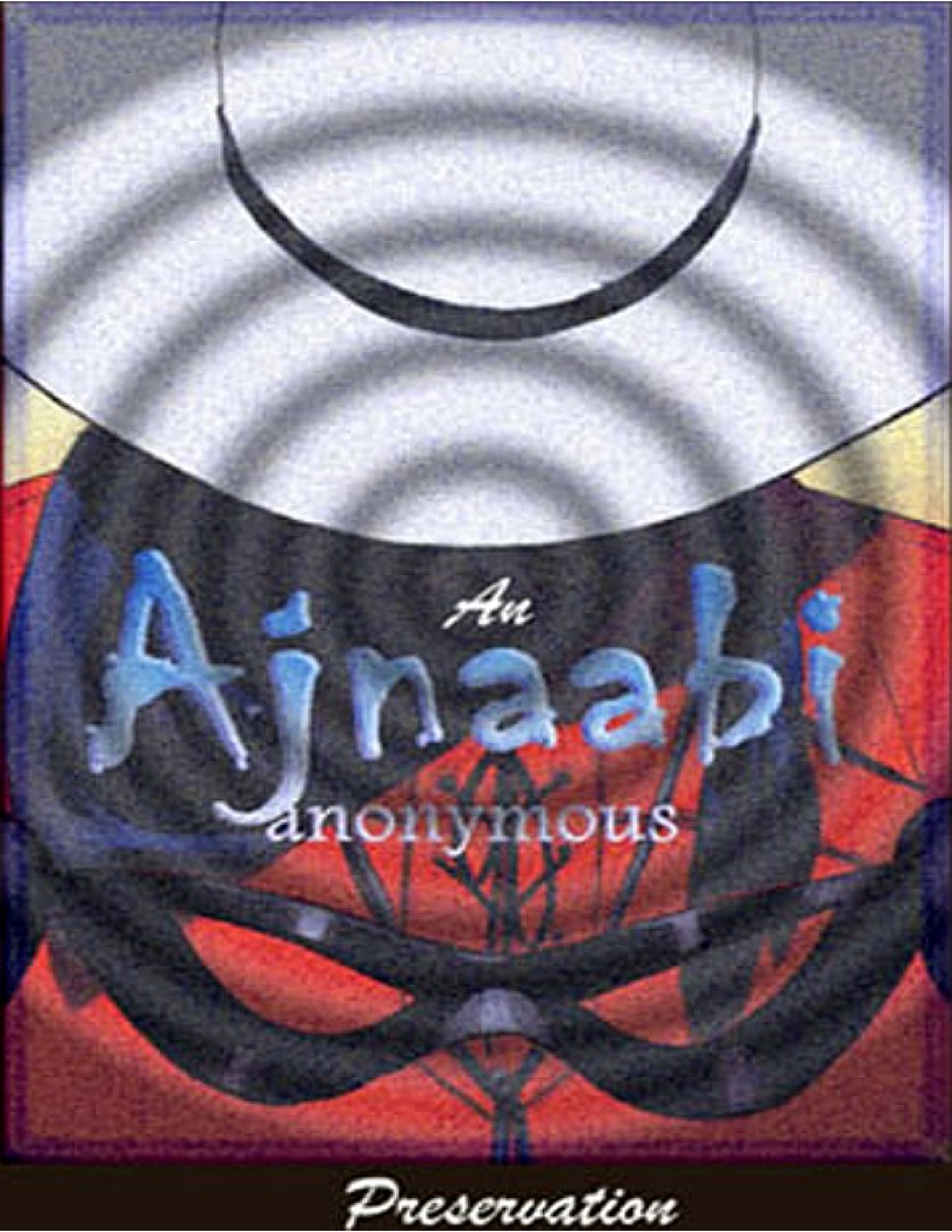

THREE DAYS LATER, AJA AND HIS BRIDE SET OUT FOR AYODHYA.


SUDDENLY —
AN ARROW! IT'S AN AMBUSH! THE DISAPPOINTED SUITORS!
LORD!
TAKE COURAGE, TIMID ONE. AJA SHALL NOT LOSE YOU, HIS VERY LIFE.
HE TURNED TO AN OLD AND EXPERIENCED COURTIER.
I ENTRUST MY BRIDE TO YOU. GUARD HER WHILE WE MOUNT THE COUNTER-ATTACK.
HIS BRIDE IN SAFE HANDS, AJA TURNED ON HIS FOES.
CHARGE!


FOR A WHILE HE LET THE BATTLE RAGE ON.
THEN, WEARY OF BLOODSHED AND SLAUGHTER, AJA MADE A DECISION.
I SHALL NOW USE MY MAGIC SPEAR.
AT ONCE, THE BEWILDERED KINGS AND THEIR ARMIES WERE CHARMED INTO SLEEP. THE NOISE AND CONFUSION OF BATTLE WAS STILLED.


AJA BLEW HIS CONCH TO ANNOUNCE HIS VICTORY.
THEN HE WENT TO INDUMATI.
COME. BEHOLD OUR FOES. COULD SUCH AS THEY EVER HOPE TO ROB ME OF YOU ?
AND THEY RESUMED THEIR JOURNEY TO AYODHYA.
THE MIGHTY KING, MY FATHER WILL REJOICE WHEN HE HEARS OF OUR VICTORY OVER HIS MOST POWERFUL VASSALS.
WHEN THEY REACHED AYODHYA—
NEWS OF YOUR VALOUR HAS TRAVELLED HOME BEFORE YOU. COME, MY CHILDREN, THE ROYAL HOUSEHOLD WAITS TO HONOUR YOU.


LATER—
MY SON, I AM OLD NOW AND WOULD LIKE TO RENOUNCE THE WORLD. BECOME THE SOVEREIGN AND RULE THE COUNTRY IN THE TRADITION OF YOUR ANCESTORS.
AND RAGHU TOOK TO A LIFE OF AUSTERITY AND MEDITATION.
AJA WAS A JUST, WISE AND STRONG KING AND EARNED THE SAME LOVE AND RESPECT FROM HIS SUBJECTS THAT HIS FATHER HAD ENJOYED.
ALL THAT AYODHYA NOW NEEDS IS AN HEIR AS PIOUS AND VALIANT AS OUR KING.
AND THAT HOPE TOO WAS SOON FULFILLED WHEN A SON WAS BORN TO INDUMATI — THE SON WHO BECAME KNOWN AS DASHARATHA, THE FATHER OF RAMA.


An
Ajnaabi
anonymous
Preservation